

## **Two California cities earn 2004 GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD from THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

In 1995, the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation started The Great American Main Street Awards (GAMSA) to recognize exceptional accomplishments in revitalizing America's historic and traditional downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. From a nationwide pool of applicants, five equal awards recognizing overall achievement in historic preservation-based commercial district revitalization are given each year.

Since 1995, only 50 communities across the country have become GAMSA winners. **This year, California has two GAMSA winners: Paso Robles and Encinitas** will be honored at the National Main Street Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. They join previous California winners: Pasadena (1995), San Luis Obispo (1999) and Coronado (2000).

Competition for GAMSA is keen with communities applying for recognition over several years and sometimes achieving semi-finalist status for up to five years before being named a Great American Main Street. Along with this prestigious award, each winning community receives a \$2,500 prize sponsored by Osram Sylvania, a bronze plaque, two road signs commemorating their achievements, lapel pins and a certificate.

### **BACKGROUND**

The **National Main Street** program is a part of the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**. Nationwide over 1,700 communities have participated in the 24 year-old program that has been incredibly successful. Based in historic preservation, the Main Street approach was developed to save historic commercial architecture and the fabric of American communities' built environment, but has become a powerful economic development tool as well. It has earned national recognition as a practical strategy appropriately scaled to a community's local resources and conditions. And, because it is a locally driven program, all initiative stems from local issues and concerns. Since 1980, the total amount of public and private reinvestment in physical improvements in Main Street communities is over \$17.0 billion. For every dollar invested in the local Main Street program, \$40.35 is generated in the community.

As part of California's Department of Technology, Trade and Commerce, the California Main Street program was a casualty of former Governor Grey Davis's budget last year. The California Main Street office closed on December 31, 2003

Anticipating this vacuum, the Executive Directors of 37 California Main Street programs stepped up and founded a 501 c (3) organization, the California Main Street Alliance (CAMSA). This alliance is run by a volunteer Board of Directors who will collect California statistics and act as a resource for communities until the program can be

reinstated. When the office was closed there were over 40 additional communities interested in becoming certified California Main Street cities.

Throughout 2003, CAMSA worked with Assemblywoman Nicole Parra of Hanford and supported by a bi-partisan group in both the Senate and Assembly, to pass a bill to move the California Main Streets program to the State Office of Historic Preservation. This Bill died on the last day of the legislative session along with all other bills requiring a 2/3 vote.

In February 2004 CAMSA cities lobbied again in Sacramento to move the program to the State Office of Historic Preservation and again received bi-partisan support. Assemblywoman Parra will introduce a trailer bill in the Assembly and Senator Denise Duchaney of San Diego has agreed to introduce a trailer bill in the Senate to achieve the move this year.